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DEFENSE PRIORITIES: THE URGENT ISSUE. (U)
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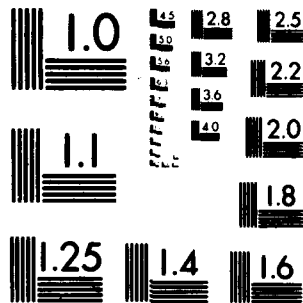
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FOREWORD

This series of "Occasional Papers" provides a means for the publication of essays on various subjects by members of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.

This Occasional Paper was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the Strategic Studies Institute, the US Army War College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



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DEFENSE PRIORITIES: THE URGENT ISSUE

As the Reagan Administration attempts to prune the defense budget of some \$15-30 billion over the next 3 years, it will be forced to consider a host of complex questions which go right to the heart of the relationship between military spending and national security. President Reagan, Secretaries Weinberger and Haig, and others will be forced to come to difficult decisions about whether to develop, modify or abandon the MX missile and whether the country should acquire any new land-based missile in light of improved Soviet missile accuracies; whether a new manned bomber such as the B-1 or the new Stealth should be developed and/or whether the United States should rely more heavily upon air launch cruise missiles which are soon to be deployed; whether two new divisions should be added to the current force structure of the Army; whether to develop an antiballistic missile; whether to proceed, and if so to what extent, with force modernization in Europe; how to resolve manpower recruitment and retention problems and a host of equally pressing and intractable issues.

These problems fall under the rubric identified by von Clausewitz as "operational activity" and have been the focus of the defense debate to date within the administration. Systems acquisitions, manpower levels, and logistical considerations are integral to the discussion of national preparedness and security and deserve careful scrutiny. However, Clausewitz identified two additional intrinsic elements of war: political motivation/strategy and stability of social and political structures. Due to the development of America's strategic doctrine in a largely technical milieu, these latter important elements have not been given the attention they deserve. Consequently, our allies and adversaries alike have argued that American military and strategic doctrines place too much emphasis upon technical solutions to political problems. The deus ex machina approach to doctrine generates policies which are unrealistic in their expectations and prospects for success; undermines the confidence of our allies in our ability to grasp the complexities and subtleties of international

politics; and frustration, skepticism, and a lack of confidence in our leaders at home.

As a result of the hostage crisis, economic difficulties, and real and/or perceived threats to American security, American public opinion has moved toward a profound suspicion of Soviet motives with the attendant call for greater military spending, impatience with our allies, and a more narrow and tough nationalism. The President may respond to these demands or he may attempt to create a positive and realistic redefinition of America's role in the world, taking into account realities such as (1) strategic nuclear parity with the Soviet Union, (2) a Western Alliance whose members recognize legitimate divergences between European and American national interests, (3) the often limited and transitory impacts of military force upon political problems, and (4) the inability of either superpower to control events in the Third World.

If the United States is to regain domestic and international confidence in its leadership and global policies, it is necessary for the President to confront the relationships between weapons, force structures, and the foreign policy and national security goals of the nation. As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor (US Army - Ret.) noted in a recent speech, he must verify the correlation of military with foreign policy before he commits himself to vast new military programs which will surely affect our economy, relations with the Soviets, and our strategic doctrine for years to come. However, as Taylor observed, "no such linkage between foreign and military policy has ever been effected in the past."

Critics of the Carter Administration cited the lack of direction of his foreign and military policy. Unless President Reagan addresses issues like where is the country going and how are we to get to this destination, his policies will be adjudged myopic and reactionary and they will be surrounded by endless political quibbling. In recent weeks, the call has been heard in the press, from various

quarters in the military, and in Washington to create a national commission on US defense policy to deal with these urgent policy questions. Such a commission might be drawn from a wide range of distinguished Americans such as former Secretaries of Defense Clark Clifford and James Schlesinger, former Secretaries of State Rusk and Kissinger, and other respected civilian and military personages. Drawn from outside of government, this advisory panel might approach the issues at hand with some impartiality, contributing perhaps to a bipartisan national consensus on a "master-plan" for national security.

This panel or study groups within the administration should address questions regarding America's interests, capabilities, the essence and limitations of power, the efficacy of diplomacy, and the role of our allies. The following questions are among the many which must be asked.

What is US global strategy? Are anticommunism and opposition to the Soviet Union the most appropriate criteria of our national interest or is there an alternative or additional set of relevant considerations? How should the United States identify which regions and issues are more important to our interests than others and how are we able to affect most favorably global dynamics? In addressing the above, we will have to determine whether the United States is to continue to address its security challenges within a collective Western framework or with increasing unilateralism. If we opt for the former, we will have to decide how to reconcile the political, economic, and military differences that exist within NATO and where we are able to identify acceptable trade-offs and divisions of labor.

We must ask ourselves in what direction we want our arms capabilities to evolve. The emphasis upon target flexibility and limited nuclear strikes outlined in National Policy Directive 59 relies to a great extent upon technological advances in accuracy that have made land-based silos increasingly vulnerable. The improved accuracy of these missiles and the explosion of technological sophistication also threaten command

centers, communication and radar networks, and satellites which are integral to keeping a nuclear war limited. In light of this dilemma, should the United States adopt the inexpensive yet dangerous launch on verification policy to deal with growing missile vulnerability or is there another targeting doctrine that would reinforce deterrence and lend itself to crisis stability? Furthermore, we need to examine our definition of deterrence. Do we want to maintain our traditional conceptualization of deterrence of unacceptable punishment of an aggressor or is there some more appropriate definition such as victory denial?

If deterrence is to work, we'll have to reconcile the calls for American nuclear superiority with those that maintain that essential equivalence is not only desirable but necessary. We'll also have to agree upon the role of perceptions and how we distinguish offensive weapons systems from defensive systems, tactical from strategic, and indeed, winning from losing. And how can we best achieve a stable deterrence? Can we negotiate arms control agreements with the Soviets or have we no other choice than to signal our resolve to the Soviets by engaging in an arms race? What non-military strengths might we utilize in our interests? Is there continuity between our short-term and long-term goals?

If deterrence works, making strategic nuclear weapons unusable, what will be the role of conventional forces in the next decade? What constraints or imperatives will our economic problems and vulnerabilities impose upon our nonnuclear forces? What role is the Rapid Deployment Force to play in the Third World and what are the political costs? Even if we had the logistical and lift capabilities to move an 80,000-man force to a Third World country, could it overcome a determined foe with increasingly sophisticated weapons (perhaps even supplied by the United States!) and training?

Unless these and other questions are answered, the Reagan defense budget will be characterized as nothing more than the Carter budget writ large. It is apparent

that the budget for defense is not unlimited and that spending priorities must be identified. It is incumbent upon the Reagan Administration to analyze the situation, identify priorities, and create a national consensus. It is only in this manner that the nation's security and interests will be most propitiously served.

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